

The Lauper and Pernoux Migration to Lehi

Written by Lee Anderson

The Lauper and Pernoux line is different than all of our other lines in that their migration to Utah happened much later. When we think of pioneers we usually think of those that crossed the plains with handcarts or wagons. However, anyone that leaves what they know and ventures into the unknown is a pioneer. As we read about this line of ancestors, we will find that they have every bit as much of the faithful, determined pioneering spirit as our ancestors that walked across the plains.

Switzerland is a relatively small country with Utah being over five times as large, but it is known around the world for its scenic beauty. The country is full of mountains, lakes and lush, green, rolling hills. France borders it to the west, Germany to the North, Austria to the east and Italy to the south. There are four official languages, German, French, Italian, and Romanian. On the western borders of Switzerland lies Lake Geneva¹.

Lake Geneva is the bluest of the Swiss lakes and also one of its deepest. It is ringed with villages, castles and beautiful hikes. On its northwestern shores within sight of the eastern chain of the Alps is a valley covered with vineyards and other vegetation. In the valley about a mile from the shores of Lake Geneva lies the little town of Luins.

On the outskirts of town was a two story home built by Jean (Johannes) Lauper for him and his wife Marie Elise Cecile Sachot. Jean was born on February 24, 1832 about 75 miles to the northeast in the town of Seedorf. Marie was born on September 20, 1837 in Luins. They were married on July 10, 1864 in Luins and four years later they had their first child, Emile Louis Lauper.

Jean was a cabinetmaker and wheelwright, Marie was a dressmaker and seamstress. Twelve years passed after the birth of their child and Marie was nearly 44 years old when she became very ill. She went to the doctor and he diagnosed the problem, she was pregnant. On April 20, 1881 a daughter joined their little family. Because Marie was so ill she made a will designating a friend to take care of her little girl in case she died. Thankfully Marie recovered and from then on the friend called Marie's little girl her "*lost daughter*."

Three months after her birth, Jean and Marie took their little girl to their church to be christened. Jean named her Alice Louise Lauper. Louise Bahr who was a friend of the family was her godmother. When Alice was nine her father bought a ranch in LeMuids which was located at the foot of the Jura Mountains about seven miles from their home. Her brother Emile stayed at their old home to work on the vineyards. Alice had the job of herding the cattle in the summer and she had two goats that she would milk.

She learned to study the bible and would recite passages from it while she was alone watching the cattle. When she was around 12 two Mormon missionaries came to their town to preach the gospel. They knocked on door after door without any success and prepared to move on to another place. As they came to the edge of the town they saw Jean's two story home set far back in a fruit orchard. At first they decided to pass it by fearing that they would be turned away like all of the other homes. But as they approached the lane leading up to the home, one of the missionaries said that he had a very strong impression that they should not pass it by.

The missionaries were very tired from knocking on doors all day so they were very happy when Alice, who had just come home from school, answered the door and asked them to come inside. She and her father listened to their message and Jean was so impressed by it that he invited them to stay for supper. Emile was baptized shortly after he heard the missionaries' message but it took longer for the rest of the family to become converted. Jean liked a good debate and invited them back several times to discuss their teachings.

¹ The locals know the lake by its Roman name, Lac Lemman though in English it is still called Lake Geneva.

It didn't take long before Marie and Alice knew that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was true however, Jean was not sure.

Alice was attending seminary at the National Church and was good friends with the minister. Though she knew that the LDS Church was true she decided that she would postpone her baptism till she had graduated. Finally Marie could wait no longer and told Jean, that she would have to be baptized without him. He agreed and accompanied her to Lake Geneva on November 22, 1892 where the baptism was going to take place.

The weather was quite rainy which was common in the area but in the area where the baptisms were taking place there was a little cove where it was not raining. After witnessing the miracle Jean exclaimed, "*You know, if I had my baptismal clothes here, I would be baptized right now.*" Marie, knowing her husband, said, "*Well look right here – I just happen to have some baptismal clothes in this bag.*" Then she reached into her bag and produced the clothes. Jean was baptized also.

About three years after Jean joined the LDS Church he became very ill and was bedridden for six months. He died at his home on 14 March 1895. Marie and Alice, who was 14, had to take care of everything on the farm because Emile was taking care of the vineyard at their previous residence. About a year after Jean's death, Emile had a great desire to go to Utah and he left with Marie's blessing.

Alice had many friends in the National Church where she had been attending seminary, including the minister. She knew that what the LDS missionaries had taught her was true but she wanted to complete the seminary bible class and graduate with her friends before being baptized. When she completed the course a year later she regretted her decision because the missionaries had moved on and there was no one around to perform the baptism.

She suddenly felt that this was the most important thing she had to do and was beginning to think that she had missed her chance to become a member of the true church. She waited with an anxious heart for some time till word came that a missionary, Elder Cannon, would be traveling through the area and a baptism date was scheduled for the following Sunday, February 4, 1897, at the shores of Lake Geneva².

As Sunday arrived a great storm was brewing over the lake and the blowing wind was causing great waves to crash upon the shore. When Elder Cannon saw the waves and the fierce storm he told Alice that it might be wiser to reschedule the baptism for the following week. Alice had waited for this day long enough and she felt like she could wait no longer and said, "*I am not afraid if you are not.*" Elder Cannon was impressed by the courage and faith of Alice so he took her hand and they walked into the water.

After they had gone several feet into the water a large wave came and about swept Alice under. She wrote, *The wind was severe and the waves raged high, but nothing could stop me from doing what I knew to be right.* Suddenly, after being knocked down by the wave, everything seemed peaceful and quiet. While the storm raged all around them there was a large circle all around Alice and Elder Cannon where the water was calm and smooth as a mirror during the baptism. The Spirit was very strong as Alice and Elder Cannon walked back to the shore and her mother started singing Nearer My God to Thee. The rest of the congregation quickly joined in.

Alice hung around with a group of young adults at parties and other activities. This is where she met Louis Pernoux. She and Louis began dating and grew quite fond of each other. Alice told Louis about her new faith and her desire to go to America. She explained what she new of the Gospel and had the missionaries contact him. A year later on May 4, 1900 he was baptized in Lake Geneva.

Alice and Louis continued dating and a year later on May 10, 1901 they were married by Alice's minister friend. They were eager to start their life together and Alice was thrilled when she found that she was pregnant. They started saving to go to America but fate intervened and Louis became sick with influenza

² The weather around Lake Geneva in February is typically around 30 degrees Fahrenheit, but when a storm comes in the icy winds blow down from the mountains lowering the temperature significantly sometimes even causing ice storms.

and died on October 26, 1901 less than six months after they were married. Alice was devastated. She wrote, *"The tableau of my young life looked very dark at that time. Only those who have had sad experiences can realize the emptiness of my heart."* Marie helped Alice through her sorrow and five months later on April 1, 1902 Alice delivered a little girl she named Lillian.

The desire to move to America was still strong and Marie and Alice worked hard to save money. Finally three years later in May 1905 they left their home in Le Muids. Alice wrote, *"It was quite a sight to see the people of Le Muids – friends and relatives were around the carriage which took us to the station. We appreciated the love of those people, their tears and good wishes. In occasions of the kind, some of your heart is in transition for awhile. Leaving your country and all the ones you know is a serious decision."*

They had to detour around France because they were not friendly to members of the LDS Church at the time. The main challenge they faced was the language barrier in Germany and Holland. Marie and Alice spoke French and many times they did not have interpreters to help them. After spending two days in Rotterdam, Holland they crossed the North Sea and through the English Channel. Nearly everyone on board was seasick. When they reached Liverpool, England Alice remembered, *"The country looked very dismal and arid to me after leaving the abundant vegetation of Switzerland."*

Alice was thrilled to cross the immense Atlantic Ocean. They left Liverpool on June 9, 1905 on the ship S.S. Arabic.³ Alice and Lillian enjoyed the journey but Marie suffered a great deal of discomfort. They arrived in Boston nine days later.

From Boston they took the train across the country to Utah. Alice wrote, *"We soon were able to continue by rail, stopping at Chicago. We were able to see a few sights there. The continuation of our travel was tiresome to my mother, but I believe all of us were wishing for a change of scenery and a quiet rest (Ha! Ha!)."*

The change came sooner than expected. One early morning at 3:00 a.m. near Grand Junction, Colorado, our train derailed and three cars turned over.⁴ We were in one of the over-turned cars. The panic was great, for it was only early morning and immediately dark when the lights were extinguished to prevent fire. The pall-mall was hard to describe. I was all right, but terror-stricken with the disappearance of my little girl. The French-speaking lady understood my cries of 'Lillane, ou es to?' (Liliane, where are you?) and came just as soon as she could to tell me that she had Liliane. My mother was crushed between two seats and was hurt quite badly. We were on the desert for twelve hours against the burning of a June sun – without water or shelter. When our train came, we were taken to a dining car to refresh ourselves, and we can say it was a real experience of thirst before this refreshment."

The papers listed Marie as one of the victims but misspelled her name which caused much anxiety and doubt for Emile who was waiting at the station for them when the train arrived in Salt Lake City. Marie and Liliane were taken to the LDS Hospital for treatment. (Liliane had a large gash on her leg.) After they recovered Emile took them to Mercer to live with him.

Marie wrote, *"On the first day of July, we arrived in the mining town. We experienced a very hot and dry summer, making us more homesick for the climate of Switzerland."* That October Emile decided to return

³ The S.S. Arabic was part of the White Star Line passenger ships. It typically sailed from Liverpool to New York but occasionally went to Boston. On August 19, 1915 it was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat. She went down in nine minutes with the loss of 44 lives.

⁴ The Youngstown Vindicator in Youngstown, Ohio reported, *"Salt Lake, Utah, June 22. – A west bound Denver & Rio Grand passenger train is reported wrecked near Cisco, Utah, near the Colorado – Utah line. Three coaches are reported in the ditch and it is rumored here that there has been loss of life. A later report is to the effect that the wrecked train is a section of No. 5 west bound, and that five coaches are off the track. The train ran into an open switch. At the Rio Grande offices here it is stated that no one was killed."* (Cisco, Utah is near the Colorado border. Grand Junction, Colorado is across the border about 50 miles away.)

to Lehi where his mother-in-law lived so they rented a home and lived together for a few months. Emile and his family moved to Bear River and Alice got a job working at the Knitting Factory.

While Emile was living in Bear River he had a dream. Alice remembered, *“He heard the voice of my father very distinctly as a command, saying in French: ‘Emile, ouvre la porta,’ which means in English, ‘Emile open the door.’ The dream was repeated three times. My brother, then was completely awake and got to his knees by his bed, asking the Lord to tell him what it meant. (My father had passed away some twelve years previously.) While on his knees, the answer came to his heart – the temple work had to be done!”* On January 8, 1908 Alice was sealed to Louis Constantin Pernoux and the next day she was sealed to her parents.

A year later Alice met a widower named George C. Phillips. He was the father of a large family and quite a bit older than Alice, but they were very fond of each other and their relationship grew. They were married (for time only)⁵ in the Salt Lake Temple on January 14, 1909 and Alice, Liliane and Marie became part of the Phillips family.

Alice was worried about how her new family would accept her as their mother and Liliane as their sister but her fears were unfounded. She wrote, *“Looking back and reviewing my coming to the Philips family, I wonder how we made it so well. Having not been used to a large family, the situation was new to me. My mother loved children, and with a few English words mixed with her French, they seemed to understand her. Liliane enjoyed the company of the other children.”*

Marie died on October 5, 1912 and was buried in the Lehi Cemetery. Alice and George had five children the last born on November 10, 1917. Five months later George had a stroke and was paralyzed on his right side. Due to the stroke George was not able to work so Alice got a job to provide for her family. George died just over three years after his stroke on May 4, 1921 and Alice was once again a widow with young children.

Alice was able to see her youngest child grow up and get married. She enjoyed being the mother of such a large family and was thrilled at the accomplishments of each of her children. She passed from this life on October 14, 1970 and was buried in the Lehi Cemetery.

⁵ When George Phillips was asked if it would be acceptable to him to be married to Alice for “time only” he replied, *“Certainly, I already have a wife [Martha Evans, deceased] and our 12 children sealed to me. There is no problem. I don’t want to rob the dead!”* Meaning that he did not want to rob Louis Pernoux of his only wife and child through the sealing process.